



OROVILLE FACILITIES RELICENSING

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 2100

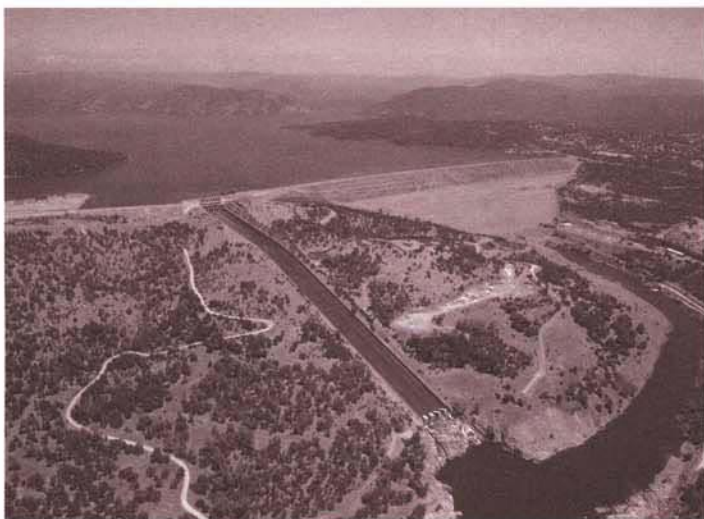
Newsletter

Vol. 4, Early Summer 2002

Process Update:

News from the Oroville Facilities Relicensing Collaborative Team

The Oroville Facilities Relicensing Collaborative Team, consisting of the Plenary Group, technical work groups, and task forces, has been meeting on a monthly basis to provide input to the relicensing process. The team has made substantial progress over the past several months and continues to work together toward reaching the goal of a settlement agreement covering resource management for the new license term. Recent progress has been made on all fronts; in particular in the areas of study plan development and approval, scoping document preparation, and interim recreation projects approval.



Lake Oroville, the State Water Project's largest reservoir.

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Study Plan Development and Approval

Study plan development and approval for implementation is well underway. Study plans are being designed to assure that adequate, quality information is available in order to understand Oroville Facilities' impacts and to develop protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures (PM&Es). Spring 2002 is a significant juncture in the relicensing process as it marks the start of Study Field Season #1.

The Plenary Group has been meeting monthly to review and approve study plans in order to secure a consensus-backed study plan package in spring 2002. Thus far, of the 74 study plans, a total of 62 have been approved. During their review of the study plans, the Plenary Group identified "heartburn issues" - defined as "can't-live-with-it" issues, discussed and when possible resolved the heartburn issues, or sent the study plan back to the appropriate work group for consideration and resolution of the issues in question.

Continued on page 4

Study Plan Development Schedule

Spring 2002

Phase 1 Study Plans Approved
Phase 1 Studies Begin

Fall 2002

Refine Phase 2 Study Plans based
on Phase 1 input

Spring 2003

Phase 2 Studies Begin

Relicensing Terms

Helpful Definitions to Know

Clean Water Act, Section 401, Water Quality Certification –

Under Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA), any project that affects a waterway must obtain certification that it is in compliance with the CWA when seeking a federal license or permit. In the case of the Oroville Facilities (FERC Project No. 2100) relicensing, the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is the agency responsible for Section 401 Certification. Before a licensee can be granted a new license, it must be certified under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. The application to SWRCB for 401 Certification by the licensee triggers the need for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Endangered Species Act (ESA), Section 7 – The federal Endangered Species Act is a major statute designed to protect endangered plants and animals from adverse effects associated with a project. Section 7 of the ESA applies most specifically to hydro relicensing as it mandates that all federal agencies involved in any “action” (i.e. a FERC license) consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for marine and anadromous species and/or the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) for fresh-water aquatic species and wildlife. If an adverse effect on a protected species is identified, the federal agency will recommend alternatives to the proposed action to avoid the adverse effects.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 – Created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) to oversee and comment on any federal licensing (in the case of the Oroville Facilities relicensing, a FERC license) that will have an effect on resources eligible in the National Register of Historic Places. Resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places can include: buildings, districts, structures and archaeological resources. Section 106 of the NHPA specifically requires a federal agency involved in any federal action to confer with the State Historic Preservation Officer, an appointed official in each State to administer the National Historic Program.

Stakeholder Quote of the Month

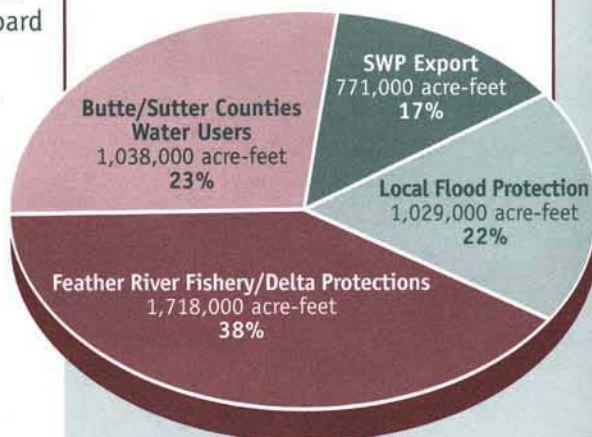
Oroville area resident, D.C. Jones, on his frequent participation in the Oroville Facilities Relicensing process:

“I’m just like horse droppings, I’m all over the place.”

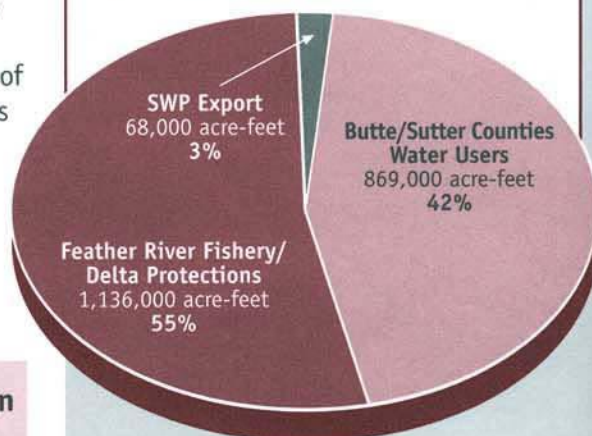
Did You Know

Major uses for Oroville Releases

2000: Major Uses for Oroville Releases
(An above normal water year)



2001: Major Uses for Oroville Releases
(A dry water year) Actual through August, with a projected dry fall



Source: California Department of Water Resources

Oroville Facilities Relicensing Schedule

Construction of Oroville Facilities Began
Initial license issued to DWR

1957 1971

Construction of Oroville Dam
Completed

June: Informal Public Meeting
November: First Plenary Group Meeting

2000 2001

January: Use of Alternative Licensing
Procedures approved

May: Approval of
Process Protocol

The Not So Elusive But Still Mysterious Steelhead

A fishing story from the Feather River

Eric See, a fisheries biologist with the Department of Water Resources, kindly shared this story with us about his eventful day fly-fishing.

"Morning broke early that day, the scent of spring filled the air. This heightened my senses, senses I knew I would need that day. I was going after the most elusive and mysterious of all fish, a fish that is truly among the grandest of all earth's creatures – the Steelhead. As I stepped into the cool flow of the stream, sizing up the conditions, reading the water, I spied a hidden lie along the bank, in the middle of a fast riffle that most people would walk right past without noticing. But not me, I seek out these lies, these obscure haunts often hold the largest of the steelhead...okay okay, enough with the kidding around.

I caught this fish in one of my favorite spots on the Feather River low flow section a couple of hours after the Environmental Work Group meeting. The fish measured 17.5 inches long, and I caught it fly-fishing on a size 14 caddis pupa. I caught some others as well, including a 13-inch hatchery fish on a dry fly."

-Eric See

Eric is equal parts biologist and fishing aficionado. He was fishing with two other DWR biologists, Jason Kindopp and Brad Cavallo, who are collecting tissue samples from the wild Steelhead, such as the one in the photo; these samples will be given to the DFG biologists doing the genetic analysis on Central Valley steelhead. Thanks Eric!



Study Implementation

This year marks a significant phase in the Oroville Facilities Relicensing (FERC Project No. 2100). The first field season begins this spring and will extend through the end of the year. Field crews will be working throughout the area to determine what effects the Project's operation has on specific resource areas.

The technical studies conducted for this relicensing will yield the information

needed to develop proper protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures for the future license. Each of the five work groups (Engineering & Operations; Environmental; Cultural Resources; Recreation & Socioeconomics; Land Use, Land Management & Aesthetics) have developed numerous studies to assess what effects the Oroville Facilities have on those resources.

Field crews will be monitoring water quality and temperature, assessing land use in the Project area, identifying cultural resources, conducting recreation assessments, mapping vegetation, biodiversity and wildlife habitats just to name a few of the activities taking place this field season. Information gathered through the studies will then be presented to each work group. The work groups will in turn use the information in discussions about PM&E measures and to help reach a settlement.

When you go camping, boating, or hiking at Lake Oroville this year you'll be seeing a lot of new people working hard on these studies. Oroville Facilities field crews will be easy to spot – they'll be in blue baseball caps and blue mesh vests with "DWR" on the back. If you have any questions regarding the field studies or the relicensing process in general, call 1-866-820-8198 or e-mail us at: orovillep2100@water.ca.gov.



Wildlife studies begin this spring.

October: Public Scoping Meeting and Site Visit

December: Review Scoping Comments

**Early Summer 2002
WE ARE HERE**

July: Public Release of Final SD1

2001

September: Public Release of Draft Scoping Document 1 (SD1)

2002

January: File Notice of Intent

March: Initial Field Studies

Scoping Documents

Another essential element to the Oroville Facilities Relicensing Program is the development of the Scoping Documents. The purpose of scoping is to:

- Identify important environmental and developmental issues related to the Project relicensing;
- Identify reasonable alternatives that should be evaluated in the environmental assessment;
- Determine the scope and depth of the analysis for Project purposes and environmental issues identified for evaluation in the environmental assessment;
- Identify issues that do not require detailed analysis.

The Department of Water Resources released Draft Scoping Document 1 (SD1) in September 2001 and hosted public scoping meetings in October 2001. The purpose of SD1 is to further the public's understanding of the Oroville Facilities and to identify issues and gather broad public and agency input on topics related to the Oroville Facilities Relicensing. SD1 formally started the CEQA/NEPA scoping process. DWR plans to release a final (revised) SD1 in July 2002 based on comments and recommendations received.

Scoping Document 2 (SD2) will be prepared and distributed in early 2003 and will include the issues and alternatives to be addressed in the environmental assessment (based on current knowledge of the Project and its associated impacts). SD2 will be developed using existing information and the results from this year's field season studies.



Fish ladder leading into the hatchery.

Interim Recreation Projects

In January, DWR announced plans to move forward with some interim recreation projects associated with the Oroville Facilities. The projects range from the promotion of existing facilities to the construction of new features. DWR is currently determining which projects may require environmental review.



The equestrian camp facility at Lake Oroville.

Some of the projects include upgrading restrooms, equestrian improvements, landscaping at the fish hatchery, Highway 162 vista points overlooking Lake Oroville, and the improvement of day-use parks, to name a few.

Significant progress has also been made on the Riverbend Park Project. The Interim Settlement Agreement Task Force reached a major milestone in April by finalizing an Interim Settlement Agreement for Initial Riverbend Park Improvements and is in the process of negotiating a companion implementation agreement for Riverbend Park.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Oroville Facilities relicensing process, and potentially participating in Plenary Group, work group or task force meetings, should call 1-866-820-8198 or email orovillep2100@water.ca.gov.

January: New FERC
License Issued

2005

January: File Final Application
File Joint NEPA/CEQA Document

2007

Feather Fiesta Days in Oroville

If you're a resident of the Oroville area or visited Oroville in early May, we hope you caught the Feather Fiesta Days! This year the Festival went from May 3-12, and the theme was "Oroville Salutes America." Some highlights included the parade, the Firefighters Chili Cook-Off, the North Afterbay Sailboat Regatta, and the Grand Opening of the Wildlife Ponds adjacent to Riverbend Park. Scott Lawrence, of the Feather River Recreation & Park District, feels "the whole wildlife pond area has been transformed. Our goal



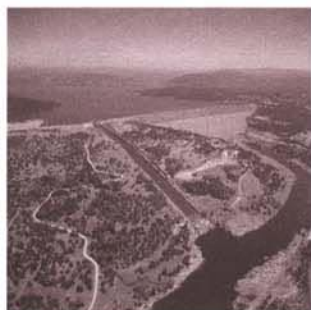
was to take the old fishing pond and turn it into something that is usable and enjoyable for the entire public and something that perhaps people passing by on the highway might see and want to come down and picnic there and enjoy the wildlife and beauty of the facility. I think we've done a pretty good job, it's just the beginning of greater things to come at Riverbend Park." If you didn't catch the Feather Fiesta Days, don't miss the free Fourth of July fireworks over Lake Oroville or the Salmon Festival in September!

Development of An Environmental Study Plan

This spring and summer, you may notice DWR staff in the field, counting plants, measuring flows and, in general, conducting environmental studies to help assess the impacts of Oroville Facilities on environmental resources ranging from water quality to bald eagle habitat. You may wonder how an environmental issue or public concern for a resource helps guide the development of the environmental study plans and, in turn, helps shape appropriate potential protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures.

The licensing process depends on having adequate information from which a final license application can be developed. Studies are needed when the existing information is not adequate to determine effects of the Oroville Facilities on resources. Studies may also be needed to comply with the statutory responsibilities of FERC, State and federal resource agencies.

DWR solicited input from participants (Indian Tribes, federal, State, local resource agencies, other interested parties, and the general public) on resource values and their relative importance in the region and in the Oroville Facilities immediate locale, resource goals and management objectives, and the Project's plan for satisfying those goals and objectives. Through the scoping process, the participants helped identify important environmental and developmental issues related to the proposed Oroville Facilities relicensing.



Resource issues, concerns, and comments were identified by participants through an open process during pre-scoping activities, by the Plenary Group and work groups, and included in comment letters. Issue statements were developed from these comments and helped guide the subsequent development of study plans.

Environmental study plans are designed to assess the impact of the Oroville Facilities on water quality, terrestrial and aquatic resources, and geomorphology. The following issues are some examples of those that were identified and helped guide subsequent development of study plans.

- Maintain or improve water quality to protect beneficial uses and meet or exceed State objectives
- Consider changes in flow rates on recreational fishing
- Maintain winter habitat for bandtailed pigeons
- Provide suitable bald eagle foraging habitat along the North Fork upstream from Lake Oroville
- Assure that adequate surveys have been completed to determine which State or federal listed species (plant and animal) are potentially being impacted by Project operations
- Re-vegetate disturbed areas within the floodplains to stabilize soil, benefit fish and wildlife, and restore the natural drainage features whenever possible

DWR and stakeholders invested considerable time and resources to work toward agreement on key issues to be addressed during relicensing. This level of effort will ensure a thorough and comprehensive Environmental Assessment of the Oroville Facilities.

Welcome!

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Oroville Facilities Relicensing Newsletter. Please join us in participating in the relicensing of the Oroville Facilities (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 2100). This newsletter is one of the key communication tools to help keep you informed during relicensing. Public participation in this process is critical, therefore your comments and input are not only welcome, but encouraged.

GET ON THE LIST!

There is no charge for this newsletter. If you'd like to be added to our mailing list, please contact us via e-mail or phone.



Toll-free number:1-866-820-8198



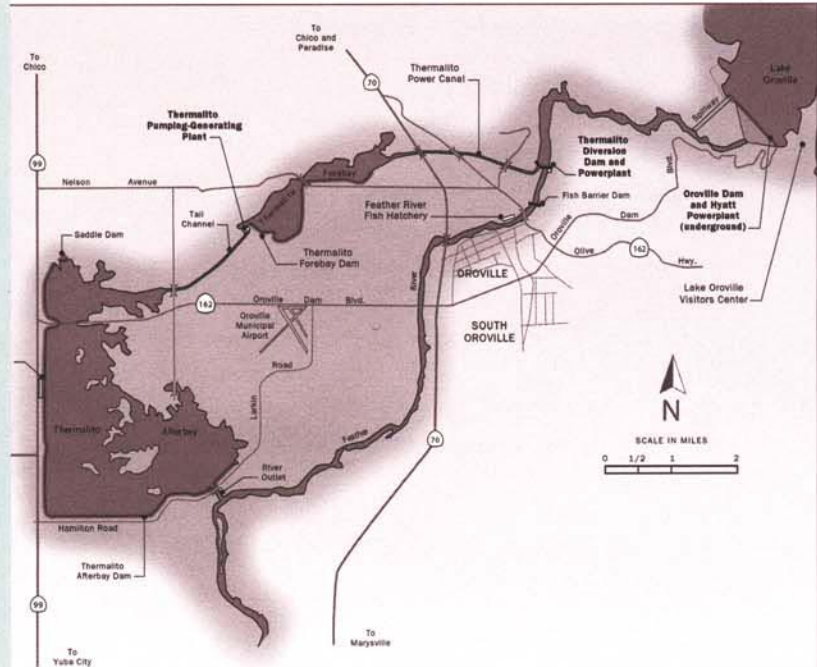
E-mail: orovillep2100@water.ca.gov

STAY INFORMED!

Visit the project web site at <http://OrovilleRelicensing.water.ca.gov> to find continually updated information including relevant documents, a calendar of upcoming meetings, and summaries of past meetings.



Map of the Oroville area



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